

An Open Letter
to my Fellow-members of
The Theosophical Society

LETTER NO. 3

APRIL 12th, 1939

DEAR BRETHREN,

This Open Letter is unusual, but I hope not the less acceptable. Its principal theme is to urge my fellow-members not to forget that war is going on all the time everywhere, and in their own immediate surroundings. Round about every Lodge, and round about the home of every member, war is going on, outrage is going on. What is each Lodge doing about this? What is each member doing about this?

It is all very well to denounce one kind of war, but what about other kinds of war which no less keep going the spirit of war?

In the name of our first Object, every Lodge should be working against the war spirit howsoever it may express itself, and every member should be known for his knightliness in the service of the weak and

down-trodden in whatever kingdom they may dwell. Peace must be begun at home, and where should peace dwell more securely than in our Lodges, among our members, and in every place to which a true Theosophist has access? Let every Lodge and every member have a fine record of working for peace wherever there is wrong. So shall war cease at home, AND THEREFORE ABROAD.

Until and unless we practise the peace that we preach war must continue. Unless and until we can live peace at home our voice shall be little heard abroad.

On the other side of sleep there is at present much work to do to try to help peoples of all nations to see clearly through the barrages of distortion which dictators, statesmen, politicians and demagogues of all kinds erect against truth.

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I hope I need hardly say that the work is no less urgent on this side of sleep. But on the other side the area which one can cover is far larger, and the difficulty of language is negligible in the case of any workers who have the necessary training. Even if they have not they can generally gather together a largish crowd of rather

sleepy people, who nevertheless can be aroused with a display of mental and emotional fireworks. I remember speaking to a polyglot crowd an evening or two ago which paid little heed to my exhortations though they were interested in my fireworks. So I thought I had better come to closer quarters.

"There is that which is worse than war", I declared with a considerable amount of emphasis. At once there was an awakening, a taking of notice.

"No", thundered back the vast majority.

"There is peace with dishonour", I retorted, "which is very much worse than war".

"Only peace is honour. Where there is no peace there is no honour", was the reply.

"There is peace bought with the misery of others", I went on. "Dare we buy our own peace at the cost of the misery of others?"

"Yes, we must, for we are only increasing misery if we add to the misery of others the misery that will come to us also if we engage in war."

"Then we have no concern to deliver the oppressed from tyranny, nor to restrain violence from trampling right underfoot?"

"This is only our business if *we* are oppressed, and if violence is trampling *our* right underfoot. It is the business of each people to look after itself. If it cannot, so much the worse. We only make matters worse if we interfere."

I did not want to inflame my audience, so I turned off my fireworks and left them in the dark. Soon they became sleepy again, for they are not much more awake in these regions of more life and light than in the regions of lesser life and light which they had left awhile.

But as I tried to look at them carefully, to see why there was this truculent hatred of any war which was not to protect their very homes,—and even then might they not do better for themselves if somehow or other they could protect their homes otherwise than by war,—I found that they had an ingrained distrust of their parliaments and their ministers. They hated the thought that their government might at any time commit them to a war in which the people would be the first to suffer and the highly placed perhaps not at all. They felt they

were fodder, and they hated the thought of their helplessness. As for duty to other peoples and nations, and for active chivalrousness towards the oppressed of other countries, they felt bitterly that the appeal to duty and to chivalry came very ill from those who did nothing to minimise unemployment, to prevent their fellow-citizens from starving, or to care for the poor in their difficulties.

All this showed me that while there are many kinds of disgraceful oppression which need a world-wide condemnation and active prohibition, there are other kinds of oppression which also must not be forgotten, and one of the very worst of these is unemployment, which, I believe in Britain runs to two million citizens. It is a terrible indictment of any government that it should allow two million people to be without work, and very likely to starve; and certainly to be in a condition of constant rebellion against the indifference of those who have work and ease and happiness, against the indifference of the country to which they are expected to give their ardent patriotism. The marvel is that a large majority of these unemployed are patriotic and take life with a smile. All honour to them.

And then there is the oppression by man of animals, a crime no less terrible, I make bold to say, than the oppression of the Jews. In every country there is this oppression going on—vivisection, hunting, trapping, and so on. The slaughter houses and the vivisection laboratories are the concentration camps. The hunting and the trapping are the pogroms. These are taking place in thyse countries whose citizens express the utmost abhorrence of such evils when practised against their fellow-human beings.

If we would stop the horrors that are going on around us in the human kingdom, shall we not also stop the horrors which are going on around us in the sub-human kingdom of the animals, perpetrated safely by men because the animals in their hands are as helpless as the Jews in the hands of the merciless?

George S. Arundale